

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* breeding in Cairo, Egypt

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Le Hibou moyen-duc *Asio otus* nichant au Caire, Egypte. Depuis le début des années 1990, des observations répétées de jeunes Hiboux moyen-duc *Asio otus* indiquent que cette espèce doit être ajoutée à la liste des espèces nicheuses en Egypte. Toutes les observations proviennent du delta du Nil et, surtout, du Caire, où des adultes et des juvéniles ont été observés régulièrement au Gezira Club. Ces observations confirment que l'espèce niche, bien qu'aucun nid n'ait encore été trouvé.

Goodman & Meininger (1989) reported Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* as a 'winter visitor in small numbers between late September and late March, almost exclusively to the Nile Delta.' They knew of no reports of Long-eared Owl breeding in Egypt, but there have been several recent records to indicate that breeding does occur.

Ahmed Riad (pers. comm.) reported that in spring 1991 he observed a Long-eared Owl chick for sale in Cairo bird market and, similarly, in spring 1993, El Arish market, on the north-east Egyptian coast, had a juvenile Long-eared Owl for sale. In the latter case it was established that the bird had been obtained on a farm in the El Arish area. During the same period he observed a roost of three Long-eared Owls on a farm in that area. Richard Hoath provided notes and sketches compiled on 16 June 2001 during observations north of Zagazig, in the Nile Delta. At 20.00 hrs he observed an unmistakable Long-eared Owl, with ear-tufts initially erect and traces of down on the outer ear, and the tail feathers did not appear fully grown. He watched for 15 minutes and compiled a detailed description. The bird flew and could not be relocated, but two down feathers were recovered. He subsequently spoke to a local resident who stated that owls had been present for about a month. Up to five birds were present, of which three were smaller than the others. She noted that the ear-tufts were distinctive and she was also familiar with Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and Little Owl *Athene noctua*.

The other observations have been made at the Gezira Club, which is the largest green space in central Cairo, and is located on an island in the Nile just south of Zamalek. Long-eared Owls have wintered at this site for several years (pers. obs.).

Andrew Grieve (*in litt.* 2004) observed three recently fledged juveniles at the Club on 31 August 1995. He also mentioned that Cheryl Wynne-Eaton had reported seeing Long-eared Owls and young in the same place on several occasions in the early 1990s. In 2002 and 2003 at least two owlets fledged there, being observed on a number of occasions from March by Jeni Darling and myself. Prior to September 2001, JD and I had observed the occasional Barn Owl and Little Owl at the club. The first Long-eared Owl was observed on 16 September 2001, when it flew to the top of a tree c.30 m away and permitted clear views confirming the identification. During autumn 2001 we continued to see the owl occasionally, and in December 2001–January 2002 we heard two Long-eared Owls calling, usually in the same area. In early March we heard begging calls and located a young owl on the golf course. Subsequently, after hearing begging calls, we found two young in the same area. On 14 March, a visiting bird-guide, Claire Sportiswoode, and I observed an adult in flight and subsequently a young owl was found 3 m up in a tree. Throughout the summer JD and I continued to observe 1–2 young owls and recorded their development.

In autumn/winter 2002–03 we regularly saw adult Long-eared Owls, but did not find any more young until early-May 2003, when one was flushed from a tree at a height of 3–4 m. A few nights later, two juveniles were observed in a tree, one at a height of c.3 m and the other above it. However, begging calls were not heard until the end of May. Throughout the summer and early autumn, until 16 October, the young were observed, but less frequently than in 2002.

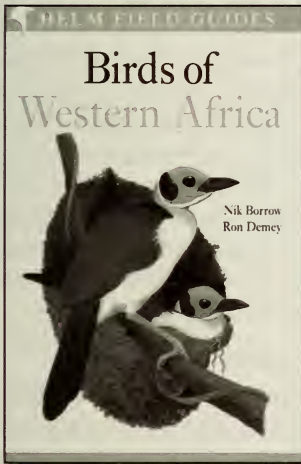
Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the assistance of Andrew Grieve, Ahmed Riad and Richard Hoath, who provided information used to prepare this note.

Reference

Goodman, S. M. & Meininger, P. L. (eds.) 1989. The Birds of Egypt. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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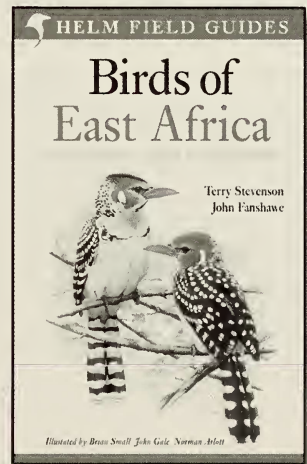
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